



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

A LETTER ON THE ILLINOIS COUNTRY TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON, 1792¹

The following letter describing the Illinois country is interesting principally because of the emphasis which the writer lays on the trade being carried from Canada into the northwest. The information in it is not particularly novel and does not differ very much from that which Governor St. Clair himself reported after he had visited the villages of Illinois. However, the contemporary information about this distant country is so meagre that the letter has its value.

Nothing has been learned of the personality or the business of the writer, but many men were then investigating this country with a view to investments and it is probable that Mitchell may have been traveling in the interest of some company.

E. G. SWEM

Sir:

Having been employed in the Illinois Country last Autumn, beg leave to lay before You some information which I acquired relative to the commerce of that country. perhaps it woud be nessesary first to give you some Idea of the Number of Inhabitants of several places, since they differ very materialy from the account given by Hutchins description of that country²— I shall begin with St. Louis on the Spanish side — it contains about 300 good stone houses — has a small garison — a strong Castle, and a tolerable wall nearly around the town — the no. of Militia is computed at 500 — it is one of the finest inland towns I ever saw, the situation is delightful — it is nine miles below the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi. St. Genevieve is 60 miles below St. Louis is an inconsiderable Town only famous for its Salt Works. KaskasKias opposite St. Genevieve, it contains about 80 stone buildings and a small church about one hundred men and a Large Proportion of

¹ From the Hamilton manuscripts, in the Library of congress.

² Thomas Hutchins, *Topographical description of Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina, reprinted from the original edition of 1778*, edited by F. C. Hicks (Cleveland, 1904).

Negroes. St. Phillips is of little consequence at present, Fort Chartres has been declining, very few inhabitants. Cahokia is a fine Town it is situated 3 mile below St. Louis on the opposite side, it contains 100 stone houses about the same no. of Inhabitants capable of bearing arms. Belle Fountaine lies 26 miles from the Mississippi East from Cahokia. it is composed of americans, about 30 Families.

The commerce of this Country is immense, when we consider the no. of Inhabitants. It is the opinion of Mr. John Edgar³ at Kaskaskias, that the consumption of English property alone amounts to 250,000 £ annually The Missouri is navigated near 1200 miles among various Tribes of savages — it employs annually from 50 to 100 boats. The whole of the Mississippi from the Natches to its source is supply'd by Canadian merchts.

Ouisconsing & Illinois Rivers at this moment have an immense quantity of British merchandize on their Banks. The Traders were impressed with the Idea that St. Clair's arms were Terrible. They in Consequence of it, pushed large quantities of goods on the Illinois to supply those who might retreat there from the fury of the incensed eagle when we consider the vast no. of Savages on the Banks of those great Rivers, that are supply'd from Canada and the baneful influence they never fail to gain, wherever they are permitted to have a commercial intercourse I think every man interested for his country woud wish to put a check to their progress, and turn the channel of commerce, trifling as it may appear, to the advantage of the Revenue of the United States or at least to the citizens of America. I shall next endeavour to show you my method which I beg leave to propose for putting an effectual stop to a contraband trade between canada and the Mississippi River, as there is only two places by which they can possibly advance into that country — one by the Illinois and the other by the Ouiscansing both have 12 Miles Land cariage, an armed boat in each with a small tender to run in shallow water woud in my opinion be a sufficient force to put a final stop to British Influence in that part of America. Mich-lamackinac a flourishing Town at the head of Lake Michigan must be intirely ruined — and shoud a Town be erected at the mouth of Illinois, no doubt woud transfer their property to it.

The Boats that will be necessary to answer every purpose for succeeding in an enterprize of the Kind I lay before you must be light Keel Boats manned with 18 men & 16 oars — plenty of canvass — two [— ?] swivels a few Blunderbusses and each man a rifle; There must be a cover made for the Men to row under bullet proof — the men must

³ John Edgar had been in Kaskaskia for several years and had become one of the most important citizens of the village.

be chosen among the best — aproved courage & Fidelity — such men can be had for 8 Dollars P Month. A small light rowing skiff with four oars & a cockswain to run in Shallow water where a larger boat cant swim. A man must be acquainted with inland navigation to be capable of traversing the Mississippi — it is a very dangerous River to those not acquainted with it. There must be a block house built on an Island in each river to prevent being cut off or surprized. I hope Sir that you'l not be offended at the bold Language which I make use of — I woud only wish to be understood, as humbly offering my opinion to the first character in America, from whose benevolence many have experienced the smiles of Fortune, that you may long live to enjoy the confidence of your country is

the Sincere wish of Your
humble Servt.

N. MITCHELL

Alex. Hamilton, Esq.
Secretary of the Treasury
Philadelphia
Feby. 9th 1792.

N. B. All dry goods consumed in Illinois country are at present brot from canada the expense of a voyge (being 3 months) and from New Orleans to St. Louis is very considerable and are as high at New Orleans as Ft. Pitt.

A RARE ABOLITIONIST DOCUMENT

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century the Honorable Timothy Jenkins was one of the leading citizens of the village of Oneida Castle, in Oneida county, New York. Jenkins was born at Barre, Massachussetts, in 1799, and was admitted to the bar in 1824. He settled in the village of Vernon, in the town of the same name, Oneida county, and practiced there until about 1832, when he removed to Oneida Castle, in the same town. For a while he served as postmaster and from 1839 to 1845 he was district attorney for Oneida county. From this office he entered the twenty-ninth congress as a democratic representative. After serving through the thirtieth congress, he was defeated for the thirty-first, but was reëlected to the thirty-second. He died at Martinsburg, New York, in 1859, leaving a considerable library, mainly of government publications.

The town of Vernon adjoins that of Kirkland, in which, at the village of Clinton, is located Hamilton college. Recently Jen-